

# Bering Sea–Western Interior RMP Scoping Meeting

## McGrath Issue Summary

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### **McGrath, Alaska January 9, 2014**

These Issue summaries are created by the BLM after each community meeting. These documents summarize what was shared and are provided to each community for verification or revisions before being considered final.

#### **Attendance:**

26 people attended the McGrath community scoping meeting. 6 BLM representatives provided a presentation, discussion time around maps, and a sharing session.

#### **Issues and concerns raised:**

##### ***BLM Land***

- Block of BLM land SE of McGrath
  - Important wintering area for caribou from the Alaska Range, portions of the Mulchatna herd.
  - People from both McGrath and Nikolai use a lot of this land for trapping.
  - There isn't much firewood on this land.
  - People from both McGrath and Nikolai go up the Salmon River and Bear Creek for Salmon in the summertime and traplines during the winter.
- Blocks of BLM land South of McGrath (all state-selected and native-selected)
  - Attendees wanted to know why these separate, random blocks of BLM land were located in these areas when it is mostly state and native corporation all around.
  - These blocks of BLM-managed land are close to Wiggins Lake and Wilson Slough, which are important for trapping, hunting, and fishing.

##### ***Fish-related***

- The George River is important to McGrath for Salmon fishing.
- Pike fishing is really important subsistence species for our community.
- Wiggins Lake and Wilson Slough is important for Pike fishing (South of town).
- Many of the whitefish species are very important for subsistence.
  - Locally, whitefish are important and they consist of the following species: sheefish; broad whitefish; round whitefish; humpback whitefish; least cisco; and Bering Cisco.
- The Big River is the primary spawning area for Sheefish, also known as Incoonu, for the entire Kuskokwim. It is very important for the entire Kuskokwim River for the Sheefish population. Many studies have been done and ADF&G would have these studies. A large portion of the Big River is on BLM land.
- The South Fork of the Kuskokwim River is very important for cisco and sheefish.
- Upstream of Nikolai is the only place that Bering cisco spawn for the entire Kuskokwim watershed.

##### ***Wildlife-related***

- We do a lot of trapping all over game management units 19D and 19C.
- The BLM lands are unique because there are no roads on them and it enables wildlife to move through the area more easily.
- A proposed pipeline (Donlin) will go right through the area that the bison Farewell Bison herd occupy.

##### ***Mineral Potential***

- These withdrawals that close entire areas to mining are foolish when a site-specific study is what needs to be done to determine the viability of each deposit and the methods of mining that would

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occur locally. This commenter received a copy of the Mineral Potential report that demonstrated an analysis of mineral deposits in the area.

### ***Trail-related***

- Interest was expressed in developing a new safety shelter cabin along the Iditarod trail between McGrath and Nikolai, though there is no BLM land in the suggested area.
- The old trail to Flat goes from McGrath up the Takotna River and down the George River toward Flat. Right now, the trail is not used much even though a cat has been driven on it. If more mining is developed in the future in Flat, that trail would become more important again and it crosses BLM land in places.
- The Cheeneetnuk (lower-portion crosses BLM, upper on State land) and the Tatlawiksuk (small portion of lower and headwaters on BLM) are also very important for fishing.
- We travel the Iditarod Trail(s) to go all the way to Rohn from McGrath for fun. The conditions determine whether we take the race route or portions of the historic route.

### ***Pipeline-related***

- In relation to pipelines or future corridors, preserve the wildlife and caribou corridors – especially along the Big River. These are important lands for wildlife migration routes. Study where migrations have occurred in the past and consider future migration routes when considering utility corridors. We are concerned about the migration corridors.
- Any pipeline corridor will provide access to ATVs and increase our hunting pressure.
- There are a lot of Guides that guide in Windy Pass area near the proposed pipeline (Donlin).

### ***Other***

- In the winter, people from McGrath travel down the Kuskokwim and at Devil's elbow, go overland to some hotspots on the Chuilnuk River on BLM land. If they cannot go overland from Devil's elbow, they travel further downriver and go all the way up the Tatlawiksuk to get to the hotspots.